

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method for use by a service provider to facilitate communication between customers of the service provider, the method comprising the steps of:

- receiving a request from a customer to establish communication with another customer;
- confirming the identity of each customer;
- transmitting to each customer executable code enabling encrypted communication therewith;
- obtaining from each customer information regarding the customer's computing environment,
- said confirming, transmitting and obtaining being performed via the Internet;
- preparing a set of applications for use by each customer, in accordance with said information and said request;
- transmitting the set of applications as executable code to each customer;
- establishing a communication path to each customer by contacting a vendor of connectivity services via the Internet to obtain said services for use by the customers;
- altering the communication path during said communication in accordance with a signal from a customer regarding customer requirements; and
- specifying the communication path to the customers, thereby permitting the customers to communicate over said path using said applications.

2-3. (Cancelled)

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the communication path is established for a limited time period.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said preparing step comprises obtaining at least one of the applications via the Internet.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said method is performed using an edge-of-network server.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6 wherein said preparing step comprises obtaining at least one of the applications from a storage device connected to the server.

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the specified communication path is established on the Internet and communications using the path are encrypted, so that the customers participate in a secure virtual trading zone.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of monitoring the communication path.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said obtaining step is performed using an applet resident at the customer.

11. (Currently amended) A system for facilitating communication between customers of a service provider, the system comprising:

a server connected to the Internet,

the server being enabled to perform a method including the steps of

receiving a request from a customer to establish communication with another customer,

confirming the identity of each customer,

transmitting to each customer executable code enabling encrypted communication therewith,

obtaining from each customer information regarding the customer's computing environment, said confirming, transmitting and obtaining being performed via the Internet,

preparing a set of applications for use by each customer, in accordance with said information and said request,

transmitting the set of applications as executable code to each customer,

establishing a communication path to each customer by contacting a vendor of connectivity services via the Internet to obtain said services for use by the customers, altering said communication path during the communication in accordance with a signal from a customer regarding customer requirements, and specifying the communication path to the customers, thereby permitting the customers to communicate over said path using said applications.

12-14. (Cancelled)

15. (Original) The system of claim 11 wherein the communication path is established for a limited time period.

16. (Original) The system of claim 11 wherein in the preparing step the server obtains at least one of the applications via the Internet.

17. (Original) The system of claim 11 wherein said server is an edge-of-network server.

18. (Original) The system of claim 11, further comprising a storage device connected to the server, and in the preparing step the server obtains at least one of the applications from said storage device.

19. (Original) The system of claim 11 wherein the server is enabled to establish the specified communication path on the Internet with communications using the path being encrypted, so that the customers participate in a secure virtual trading zone.

20. (Original) The system of claim 11 wherein the server is enabled to monitor the communication path.

21. (Original) The system of claim 11 wherein the server obtains the customer information using an applet resident at the customer.

22. (Currently amended) A computer program product comprising instructions for performing a method to facilitate communication between customers of a service provider, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a request from a customer to establish communication with another customer;

confirming the identity of each customer;

transmitting to each customer executable code enabling encrypted communication therewith;

obtaining from each customer information regarding the customer's computing environment, said confirming, transmitting and obtaining steps being performed via the Internet;

preparing a set of applications for use by each customer, in accordance with said information and said request;

transmitting the set of applications as executable code to each customer;

establishing a communication path to each customer by contacting a vendor of connectivity services via the Internet to obtain said services for use by the customers;

altering the communication path during the communication in accordance with a signal from a customer regarding customer requirements; and

specifying the communication path to the customers, thereby permitting the customers to communicate over said path using said applications.

23-24. (Cancelled)

25. (Original) The computer program product of claim 22 wherein the communication path is established for a limited time period.

26. (Original) The computer program product of claim 22 wherein said preparing step comprises obtaining at least one of the applications via the Internet.

27. (Original) The computer program product of claim 22 wherein said method is performed using an edge-of-network server.

28. (Original) The computer program product of claim 27 wherein said preparing step comprises obtaining at least one of the applications from a storage device connected to the server.

29. (Previously presented) The computer program product of claim 22 wherein the specified communication path is established on the Internet and communications using the path are encrypted, so that the customers participate in a secure virtual trading zone.

30. (Original) The computer program product of claim 22 wherein the method further comprises the step of monitoring the communication path.

31. (Original) The computer program product of claim 22 wherein said obtaining step is performed using an applet resident at the customer.